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7/17/01

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION REPORT

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



277416

I. HEADING

DATE:
July 17, 2001

SUBJECT:
Emergency Response, ATOFINA Chemical Release, Riverview, Wayne Co, Michigan

FROM:
Michelle Jaster, OSC, Ralph Dollhopf, OSC and Robert Buckley, OSC
U.S. EPA, Region V, ERB, RS1, Grosse Ile, MI (Email: jaster.michelle@epa.gov)

TO:
C. Stanton, USEPA, OSWER, Washington, DC
R. Karl, Chief, ERB, Chicago, IL
J. El-Zein, Chief RS1, Grosse Ile, MI
W. Messenger, Chief, U.S. EPA, ERB/ESS, Chicago, IL
T. Kruger, U.S. EPA, ORC, Chicago, IL
C. Allen, Public Affairs, Chicago, IL
J. Laforanara, ERT, Edison, NJ
R. Nickle, ATSDR, Atlanta, GA
M. Johnson, ATSDR, Chicago, IL
S. Garrity, USCD MSO Detroit, MI
D. Reinhardt, AST, USCG, Fort Dix, NJ
M. Chezick, DOI, Philadelphia, PA
J. Beckius, Jr., NTSB, Washington, DC
L. Woolley, AQD, MDEQ, Livonia, MI
S. Tackitt, Wayne Co. DH Wayne MI
A. Marouf, U.S. EPA, H&S, Chicago, IL
D. Wade, MDCH, Lansing, MI
Duty Officer, NRC, Washington, DC

POLREP #2

II. BACKGROUND

Site No.:	Pending
Delivery Order Number:	NA
Response Authority:	CERCLA
CERCLIS ID Number:	NA
NPL Status:	Not on NPL
MDEQ Notification:	Yes
NRC Report(s):	572926 & 572941
Latitude/Longitude:	N 42°11'03", W 083°09'50"
Start Date:	July 14, 2001
Completion Date:	Pending

III. SITE INFORMATION

A. Incident Category

CERCLA-Emergency Response

B. Site Description

1. Site Location

The site is located at 17168 W. Jefferson Ave, Riverview, Wayne County, Michigan, at the intersection of Pennsylvania Road and West Jefferson Avenue. Vacant, Industrial, Residential and Railroad properties surround the site.

2. Description of Threat

On Saturday July 14, 2001 at about 0430, a catastrophic fire occurred following the release of toxic methyl mercaptan from a railroad tank car. A total of five tank cars were staged in the immediate vicinity of the incident (2 methyl mercaptan and 3 chlorine). One of the chlorine cars was also damaged during the incident, releasing an unknown quantity of gas to the atmosphere. The fire resulted in the deaths of three workers. An estimated 2,500 residents were temporarily evacuated from surrounding communities. The Trenton Channel and the Detroit River were temporarily closed to boat traffic by the US and Canadian Coast Guards. Tremendous quantities of water were used for fire suppression, with discharge to Monguagon Creek or the Trenton Channel of the Detroit River. No damages to Natural Resources were observed or reported. There was extensive print and electronic media coverage. Refer to the Initial POLREP for additional information.

IV. RESPONSE INFORMATION

A. Current Situation:

The fire was extinguished on Saturday July 14, 2001. The evacuation order was lifted over several hours that same afternoon and evening. Operations at the facility are currently focused on Federal, State and Local investigations into the cause and nature of the incident.

B. Actions Taken:

Refer to the Initial POLREP for actions taken on Saturday July 14 and Sunday July 15, 2001.

On Monday, July 16, 2001, USEPA continued air monitoring efforts around the perimeter of the facility and in the surrounding neighborhoods. The TAGA bus also conducted a final round of real-time air monitoring for methyl mercaptan, with preliminary results again indicating no detections. The USCG FOSC issued a letter to Atofina detailing the air monitoring, reporting, and notification requirements for all future rail car remediation activities and resumption of other plant processes. USEPA will continue to conduct air monitoring until Atofina is prepared to undertake these responsibilities with their own subcontractor. USEPA also conducted air monitoring at three residential locations, in response to complaints called in to the Hotline established by Atofina. Residential homes were screened with PID, FID, and methyl mercaptan Draeger tubes. No methyl mercaptan was detected in any of the residences.

A press conference was held at USEPA's Grosse Ile office to address the air monitoring program and results to date. Participants in the press conference included USCG, USEPA, Wayne County Department of Public Health, Congressman Dingell, and Atofina. The press conference was extremely well attended, with coverage from all local television and print media.

On Tuesday, July 17, 2001, USEPA conducted air monitoring in the morning around the perimeter of the facility and in the immediately adjacent residential neighborhoods. USEPA and USCG MSO Detroit met with Atofina and their air monitoring contractor (Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health (CTEH) of Little Rock, Arkansas) to discuss the transition of the air monitoring responsibilities. This program will include air monitoring at the facility, on the perimeter of the facility, in the surrounding neighborhoods, and at residential homes (upon request). In addition, the air monitoring program will be modified appropriately as remediation and start-up activities

at the plant increase in the coming days. USEPA and START contractors assisted CTEH with the transition of the air monitoring responsibilities, and CTEH began air monitoring in the afternoon. USEPA OSCs responded to several media inquiries. Local media interest continues.

C. Next Steps

USEPA will continue to monitor CTEH's air monitoring program and its subsequent progress. START contractors will prepare site activities and air monitoring report.

D. Key Issues

Captain Garrity of USCG MSO Detroit is the lead Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) for the incident. USCG MSO Detroit will oversee future activities at the facility in regards to rail car remediation and the gradual resumption of plant operations. USEPA FOSCs will continue to support USCG with air monitoring program and other matters, as requested.

V. COST INFORMATION

Estimated site costs as of July 18, 2001: Not available.

VI. OTHER INFORMATION

The following URLs provide narrative and pictures about the incident from the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press:

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/metro/0107/15/a01-247757.htm>

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/metro/0107/15/a06-247726.htm>

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/metro/0107/15/a06-247717.htm>

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/metro/0107/15/a06-247719.htm>

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/metro/0107/15/a01-247743.htm>

http://freep.com/news/locway/chem17_20010717.htm

http://freep.com/news/locway/health17_20010717.htm

http://freep.com/news/locway/chem16_20010716.htm

http://freep.com/news/locway/wed16_20010716.htm

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/wayne/0107/17/d03-248350.htm>

<http://detnews.com/2001/metro/0107/16/c01-248088.htm>

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*cost recovery
legal confusion re: Cost Rec.*

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